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AUTHOR Grittner, Frank M.
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ABSTRACT

Three interrelated, principal factors bearing on the concept of "individualized instruction" are critically examined in this study. They include the notions of: (1) "integrity of the discipline," (2) "democratization" of instruction, and (3) academic accountability. Discussion of the growing mythology surrounding individualized instruction reveals critical weaknesses and basic, contradictory educational objectives in such teaching methods. While the value of educational "democratization" cannot be denied, the realities of educational financing and the nature of language instruction itself preclude the success of individualized programs of instruction at this time. The author concludes by noting that "...overall, individualization appears to be no more effective than conventional lockstep instruction insofar as student 'achievement' is concerned." (RL)

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INDIVIDUALIZING FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: NEW MYTHS AND OLD REALITIES

by
Frank M. Grittner
Specialist, Foreign Language Education
Department of Public Instruction
126 Langdon Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

The keynote address delivered October 12, 1971, at the 54th Annual Meeting of the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers, Concord Hotel, Kiamesha Lake, New York.

To begin with, let's look at the all-encompassing myth which forms the rationale for individualized instruction, namely the belief that human beings are infinitely diverse and that, therefore, each student should be approached individually on his own intellectual and emotional terms. In theory, I accept that. However, I also believe in motherhood and in zero population growth. And I also have five children, which goes to show what can happen to very sensible theories when people try to put them into practice. Similarly--with regard to the question of individualizing instruction--I can only say, "Of course I believe in it." However, I also believe in other things, such as the right of the classroom teacher to survive mentally and physically and to have a few leisure hours each week. I mention this because it is one of the crucial points at which myth parts company with reality. The evidence indicates that it is sheer fantasy to expect an unaided teacher to set up some elaborate kind of individualized program in the regular classroom situation without first making such changes as providing teacher aides, increasing the budget for equipment and materials, and greatly reducing the pupil-teacher ratio. Unless such changes are made, there isn't much honest advice that anyone can give. It's sort of like the woman who asked the doctor when she should take the pill. And the doctor said, "In every conceivable situation." It's the same with

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individualization. "When do you do it? When do you treat students as unique individuals?" Obviously, whenever conditions make it possible. But the belief that the classroom teacher can unilaterally create those conditions by next Tuesday is a dangerous myth.

And then there is also the rather substantial myth that someone knows the meaning of the term "individualized instruction." In reality, there are an amazing number of opinions about what it means. For example, there are those who look upon individualization as nothing more than self-pacing through a clearly-described and carefully-sequenced body of subject matter. In its most extreme form, the self-paced curriculum is based upon a large number of so-called "behavioral objectives," each of which tells precisely how the student will be performing when he has successfully completed each of the steps in the self-paced curriculum.

So, what is a behavioral objective? For the uninitiated, let me give an example of such an objective applied to foreign language pronunciation.

> "Upon hearing each of the following ten utterances spoken at normal speed by a native speaker, the student will respond within 3 seconds by imitating the utterances correctly with 90% accuracy." (There would then be ten utterances containing critical phonemes for a given language.)

This has the characteristics of a good behavioral objective, which are:

ONE: It tells what the student will be <u>doing</u> in terms of a specific behavior (i.e., oral mimicry of ten utterances);

TWO: It defines the <u>conditions</u> under which the behavior will occur; (i.e., the student will hear a native voice and respond to it);

THREE: It has a criterion of acceptable performance (i.e., the student will respond within three seconds and he will get 90% of the critical phonemes right);

AND FOUR: It describes an overt, measurable set of behaviors (i.e., you can

listen to the student and determine whether or not he got 9 out of 10 of the critical phonemes right).

Now, one problem with behavioral objectives is that they are time-consuming to write--you need hundreds of them to cover a single year of language. But even if the teacher <u>can</u> find the time, I still have some serious reservations about how far it is possible to go with this approach. For example, I have from time to time enjoyed reading poetry in English, German and Spanish. But on those occasions, the impact of lyric poetry was all internal (except for a few incidental facial expressions). So, what do you do for a measurable overt behavior? Do you accept as a criterion of performance something like, "Upon reading the following sonnet, the student will furrow his brow in appreciation 80% of the time?"

And what about the arbitrary percentage criteria for correctness? (Eighty percent is a common one.) If, in German for example, we accept correctness standards of 80% for lexical items, 80% for gender, 80% for case endings, 80% for adjective endings, 80% for verb endings and 80% for syntax, we are left with only a 26% chance that the student will put all of these elements together to come up with a correct sentence insofar as these few elements are concerned. In short, the 80% criterion of correctness is a statistical absurdity when it is applied to the individual elements which go to make up a complete utterance.

According to the behavioral objective approach, all you have to do is to prepare objectives for all aspects of the foreign language, arrange the objectives in the appropriate sequence, set up an educational production line which will enable each pupil to meet each objective . . . Then, you hire the needed production workers who may--or may not--be regular certified teachers. Above all, you hire an efficiency expert to eliminate those machines and people that do not contribute to the efficient processing of students and to keep those that do. A feedback system is also essential to this so-called "systems approach." Its purpose is to evaluate the degree to which specific, measurable behaviors

are being realized. There are many advocates of individualized instruction who believe that anything worth learning can be stated in the form of measurable overt behaviors. However, there are others, who believe that anything which can be so stated is not worth learning in the first place.

For example, Oettinger (author of the book, Run Computer Run) recently criticized all the various self-pacing schemes by saying that when you start with behavioral objectives you cannot possibly end up with "the cultivation of idiosyncrasy." As he expresses it, "It is, rather what an industrial engineer might call mass production to narrow specifications with rigid quality control. Each pupil is free to go more or less rapidly exactly where he is told to go." The point of this quotation is to show that, while there are many people who feel that the key to individualization lies in self-pacing students through pre-determined objectives, there are others who have nothing but contempt for this definition of individualization. Many critics say that you have to go far beyond this and allow for something which they call "learning style." That is, you've got to give students all kinds of options as to how they learn. Learning-style advocates would, for example, condemn programmed instruction and audio-lingual instruction on the same grounds, namely, that they both call for a rigidly prescribed mode of learning which is the same for all students.

Incidentally, the history of educational research tends to support the view that there is no one best method which can be demonstrated as applying to all students. As a matter of plain fact, the usual outcome of studies which compare one method with another is "no significant difference." For example, the Pennsylvania Study showed that the traditional grammar-translation method was just as effective as the audio-lingual method in teaching language skills. As another example, several studies have shown no great advantage to teaching listening before reading and writing, despite what the audio-lingualists have contended. And recently, some humorist has referred to the language laboratory

as "education's Edsel." In support of the Edsel hypothesis, there are a number of large-scale studies which have indicated that the physical presence of a language laboratory makes no measurable difference in what students learn.

And then, there are always a number of disconcerting individuals--for example, a man like Heinrich Schliemann--who gain incredible proficiency in a number of foreign languages by breaking all conceivable learning rules. In Schliemann's case, he learned all the major European languages including English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Russian and French by beginning with the written word and using grammar translation techniques. More specifically, he obtained translations of Oliver Goldsmith's novel, Vicar of Wakefield, which was available in his native German and in all the target languages (plus, of course, the original English). He then proceeded to memorize the entire book to the point where he could recite it from memory in every language. As for pronunciation, he made nothing but mistakes from the very beginning. This didn't bother him; he merely hired a native aide in each language to remediate his pronunciation until it was acceptable to native speakers. Through his knowledge of foreign languages, Schliemann went on to make a fortune in the export-import business which he then abandoned to become an archaeologist. Using as a guide the Iliad and the Odyssey, which he had also memorized in classical Greek, he unearthed the ancient city of Troy. (Until Schliemann's time, everyone had thought Troy was merely a legendary city.) Well, enough of Schliemann . . . the only purpose of this example was to illustrate the fact that many people can arrive at the same destination if you let them go about it in their own way. That is, if you individualize the learning style; if you make all learning modes open-ended.

However, even allowing for self-pacing and for variety of learning styles is not sufficient, according to some people . . . During the last Northeast Conference Jakobovits suggested that the content as well as the style must be varied. As he expressed it, "An effective foreign language curriculum . . . will

offer courses that teach specific goals in which the student is interested . . . It will use methods and techniques that take into account the individual learner's characteristics . . ." Jakobovits advocates what he calls "an individuated curriculum" which allows the student to choose only that foreign language content that interests him. He denies that there is any single learning sequence which all students must go through. In place of that, he recommends a series of "how to do it courses," which the student can pick up cafeteria style. He lists courses such as "to converse with the native on travel and shopping," . . . "to understand foreign movies," . . . "to be able to read newspapers," and "to listen to radio broadcasts."

As a matter of fact, many schools have developed "learning packages" or "units of instruction" on topics of this kind. These learning packages are usually in the form of student "contracts" or "unipacs." On the surface the idea of interest-centered mini courses sounds reasonable in theory. However, when you try to convert theory into practice, certain realities tend to get in the way. And the reality is, that you still have a situation where teachers are trying to guess precisely what content will prove interesting to students in the younger generation. And, the trouble is, that teachers guess wrong just as often with these supposedly interest-centered units as they did with the selection of traditional text materials. And the result is that the teacher puts a great deal of time into preparing interest-centered unipacs, only to find that half the students could care less about them.

At this point, many people would suggest that the definition of individualized instruction has been pushed to the limits of credibility. Having taught for eight years in urban public high schools with beginning foreign language classes containing as many as 40 students, I find it personally mind boggling to think of a program which allows each student to go at his own pace, which accommodates his own particular learning style (assuming he

has such a thing) and which offers him also a smorgasbord of options, a number of which will presumably convert the most lethargic teenager into an eager, intrinsically-motivated language learner. Even a myth of those heroic proportions is not enough . . .!!

On the contemporary scene we also have the so-called "free school" advocates who claim that the student's own interests and his perception of what is relevant to life is the only valid basis for establishing an individualized program in any field whatever. Pushed to its logical conclusion this would mean that every student would have to have his own program, and that the program would have to be modified every time his interests or his perception of reality happened to shift.

Well, so much for the myth that someone can supply a clear, concise definition of individualization. In reality, the concept covers everything from the permissive free school to the Skinner "rat box" approach, in which the student's only choice is whether to go slower or faster through the prescribed material.

Another individualization myth has to do with the term "innovation." I have also heard people refer to "new innovations" . . . And any day now I expect to hear that individualization is a "novel new innovation." The question is, just how new or innovative is individualization? To answer this--and to get a little break in routine at this point--let's play an audience participation game. Don't worry, I'm not asking you to do anything except a bit of thinking. And, not being a Skinnerian behaviorist, I accept the reality that human thinking is a valid form of behavior even though there may be neither overt nor measurable behaviors. So, all I ask is that you listen to a few quotations, think about them and then guess: ONE, who said it? and TWO, when?

Quotation Number One

"Uniformity is the curse of American schools. That any school or college has a uniform product should be regarded as a demonstration of inferiority . . . clearly, individual instruction is the new ideal."

Quotation Number Two

"Course objectives must be stated in very definite terms. To say that a child must learn long division, for example, is not sufficiently definite. To say that every child shall be able to divide four-place dividends by two-place divisors . . . and that he shall be able to divide such examples at the rate of two in three minutes with 100% accuracy, is a definite statement."

The first quote was not by Silberman (author of Crisis in the Classroom)--but it could have been. . . The second quote was not by Gagné or Mager or some other contemporary bandwagoneer for behavioral objectives. . . As a matter of fact, the first quotation was by the president of Harvard University in 1892 (79 years ago) condemning the evils of lockstep education (in a speech before the National Education Association). The second quotation was from the superintendent of schools in Winnetka, Illinois in 1924--47 years ago. . . In the early 1920's Winnetka, Illinois had a highly sophisticated program of individualized instruction in foreign languages, mathematics and in other so-called "skill" areas. It was based on behavioral objectives, it employed a kind of programmed instruction, and it was the latest thing--47 years ago--for the elementary and junior high school levels.

At the high school level, during the same era, the Dalton plan was more popular. In fact, in the 1920's there were hundreds of Daltonized high schools in the USA and in other countries. (For example, England, Japan, Russia and China.) What did it mean to be Daltonized? Well, students in the Dalton schools signed "contracts" to do a certain specified amount of work, within a given period of time, often for a stipulated reward. (For example, in

some programs the student could contract for a grade of A, B or C.) In the Dalton Plan, the student was supposed to learn to budget his own time, to evaluate his own progress through self-testing, and to plan his own means of attacking learning problems. This was in the 1920's--by the 1930's these plans had largely disappeared.

I mention these examples because I think history is repeating itself, sort of like a recurrent dream. Mass education is again under attack, but with new rhetoric. (There are book titles like Death at an Early Age, Crisis in the Classroom, Why Children Fail, Our Children are Dying, etc.) And the responses of the educational establishment are essentially the same. . . Once again we have overworked teachers trying to compete with workbook publishers by turning out dittoed contracts or "unipacs." ("Unipac" is a contemporary term for the Dalton-type "contract.") The modern individualizing plans may have some points of difference--such as flexible scheduling, audio-visual materials, and team teaching--but, essentially they are the same as the older plans. That is, they are formalized administrative procedures for moving students through predetermined bodies of subject matter, with some adjustments being made in (1) how fast the student learns, and (2) in the methods by which the student learns.

In the 1920's there were hundreds of schools in this country and thousands around the world using variations of the Dalton Plan. . . Where did all this innovation of a half century ago disappear to. . . Why did it all disappear . . .? Well, the simple answer is that the various schemes simply didn't work, for reasons which I will get to a little later on. Another answer is that progressive educators won out by the end of the twenties. Their idea of innovation became the "in" thing through the late twenties and early thirties. . . And, progressive education was in many ways, the polar opposite of the various structured individualized plans. . . Like Jakobovits, whom I quoted earlier, progressivists believed in starting with student interests

and working from there into subject matter. The various individualization schemes, on the other hand, started with subject matter and tried to make its acquisition more systematic, more efficient, and more palatable to the student. Both the progressivists of fifty years ago and the "free school" advocates of today are scornful of an educational approach which is built upon subject matter. This is because subject matter is based upon social realities of the past. And, for that reason it is said to have no value unless the student can make connections between it and his present or future life. And, also, because we live in a rapidly-changing society, learning how to learn is said to be the only educational goal which makes any sense at all. As one progressivist put it:

> Do you not see that if you try to fit the student exclusively for one way of life you make him useless for every other? You put your trust in the existing social order and do not take into account the fact that that order is subject to inevitable revolutions, and that you can neither foresee nor prevent the revolution that may affect your children. We are approaching a state of crisis and an age of revolution.

That "modern" statement about education in a changing society was made, not by Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock, but by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his pedagogical book Emile in 1762—well over 200 years ago. Rousseau also stated that the imposition of subject matter was an excellent way to kill the student's desire to learn.

John Dewey wrote in defense of progressive education in 1938 while speaking out against the traditional subject-oriented curriculum. Referring to the products of the traditional school he said:

> . . . how many students have lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them? How many acquired special

> skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited? How many came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom? How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power of control over the latter? How many came to associate books with dull drudgery, so that they were "conditioned" to hate all but flashy reading material?

Compare the above statement by Dewey with the words of a typical contemporary critic named Sobel who describes our existing educational system with words like "repressive, irrelevant, impersonal, destructive, joyless, obsolete and authoritarian. . ." Sobel also makes the point that: "As presently organized, the inescapable truth is that our schools seldom promote and frequently deny the objectives we, as a nation, espouse. Rather than being assisted and encouraged to develop their own individuality, our children are locked into a regimented system that attempts to stamp them all into the same mold. The student is filled with facts and figures which only accidentally and infrequently have anything whatsoever to do with the problems and conflicts of modern life or his own inner concerns."

If time permitted, it would be possible to give hundreds of additional examples to illustrate that the so-called "innovations" have all been thought of before, and have been found wanting before. . . It is probably safe to say that there <u>are</u> no new pedagogical ideas. . . there are merely contemporary applications and misapplications of old ones. So, at this point, let's move away from the history and mythology of individualization and look at a few practical realities which might explain past failures and prevent future ones. As I see it, there are certain basic forces operating in American education. And anyone who presumes to individualize instruction must come to terms with each of them. The first of these forces I would identify as "the integrity

of the discipline." By this I am referring to a phenomenon that every competent foreign language teacher is familiar with. Namely, that there are certain minimal learnings necessary in each foreign language if it is to be called foreign language instruction. For example, however liberal a language teacher may be with regard to student freedoms, he cannot decide that a student is free to choose whether or not to learn such things as the French partitive or German transposed word order. Nor can a Spanish teacher omit teaching the trilled "r" on the grounds that it is bad for a student's mental health. Once a student has elected a given language, he has committed himself to some rather clearly definable objectives that have to do with phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary and culture as these elements relate to the various language skills.

I should add here that not all people agree that the teacher needs to be concerned about the integrity of the discipline. Over a year ago I visited an individualized program and found that the language teachers did not feel it was necessary for them to check student achievement at regular intervals. In their opinion, the students could do that themselves; all the students needed, they said, was properly-written objectives and self-checking answer sheets. . . I was then--and am now--skeptical of this approach. I doubt that students, or any of us, are capable of evaluating our own performance objectively and adequately. And, if you omit the confirmation or correction, which good testing provides, this leads only to confusion and chronic error in the use of the language.

The second force with which we must cope is democratization. In American secondary and higher education the impact of democratization has been with us for nearly 80 years. And, as I discovered in my visits to German schools last year, and in discussions with European educators, the democratization force is beginning to cause severe problems in Europe as well. (European educational

systems are beginning to move from their traditional social-class tracking systems to the democratized comprehensive school on the American pattern. Sweden has already made the move; Germany and England are in the process.) By "democratization" I refer to a belief in universal educability; that is, to the belief that everyone has the right to an academic education regardless of intelligence, socio-economic background, vocational aspirations, or motivational drives. One interpretation of this principle includes the demand that the student must succeed in whatever he does. (The title of a recent book by Glasser called Schools Without Failure is indicative of this trend. And, several years ago there was even an article in the Modern Language Journal entitled "French for the Feeble Minded.")

The third major force could be summarized by two words: "time" and "money." In administrative circles "cost accountability" is the key term today. Pressure is coming from federal, state and local governing bodies to the effect that schools should be more "accountable" in terms of the per-pupil cost for each hour of instruction in each subject area. As an illustration of the cost accountability force at work we can take the accelerating decline in Latin enrollments in the high school curriculum. The per-pupil cost of Latin is high because of small classes and because Latin teachers, being older, on the average, are higher on the salary schedule. As enrollments continue to decline, class size diminishes, and, as a result, the cost per hour per Latin student finally reaches the point where the cost accountability force takes over and someone with a bookkeeper's mentality says, "Let's invest in something else."

So, to summarize the point, the basic curricular realities are: (1) instructional costs per pupil, (2) democratization and (3) the integrity of the discipline. So, using these categories as a sort of backdrop, let me now raise a few pertinent questions about the feasibility and effectiveness of individualized instruction. The first question is "What happens to student

achievement in individualized foreign language programs?" That is, can the integrity of the discipline be maintained. With regard to programmed instruction, or other tightly-structured individualized programs, the evidence is quite consistent: Student achievement tends to be at or below the achievement levels of conventional classroom instruction. In the case of programmed instruction, student achievement, student attitudes and student dropout rates tend to be strongly on the negative side. As one example of this, a rather carefully planned French experiment was conducted in Minneapolis a few years ago in which a group of students taught by A-LM were compared with a matching group taught by means of programmed instruction. The same teacher was in charge of both groups, the same laboratory and classroom were used, and the groups were comparable in intelligence and socio-economic status. However, at the end of two years, the achievement of the experimental group was significantly lower than that of the audio-lingual group as measured by standardized tests of the various language skills. Perhaps it is this kind of result that has led Valdman, of Indiana University--a pioneer in programmed foreign language courses--to abandon programmed instruction in favor of what he calls "guided learning." This refers to an approach which allows more student choices with regard to learning style and social interaction. The experimental program in West Bend, Wisconsin would fit into this category. Students in the West Bend program achieved at about the same level as students in non-individualized programs. However, student attitudes toward the program were quite favorable and the dropout rate was considerably lower in the second and third years of the program.

However, there is a persistent problem with all of these behaviorally-oriented individualized program in that they tend to inhibit spontaneous oral use of the foreign language. Despite all efforts to the contrary, the fulfilling of behavioral objectives in foreign language instruction tends to perpetuate

what Howard Nostrand has called "the age of planned parrothood." This remark was directed toward the dogmas of the audio-lingual movement, but it is also applicable to many of the structured individualized programs. Both approaches tend to emphasize the elicitation of specific student responses based upon specific stimuli. The limitations of this approach become highly visible whenever we ask students to depart from the prelearned material and ask them to come up with an original spontaneous thought.

The same sort of result is often produced by "unipac" or "contract" programs which are almost totally oriented toward producing convergent thinking (that is, arriving at the one right answer). This is virtually mandated by the unipac format which calls upon the student to correct his own work. This self-correction device tends to discourage divergent thinking. The student must come up with the response that was programmed into the answer sheet. Individualized programs also tend to discourage free response oral work. This is because genuine conversation requires the production of a constant stream of novel utterances in response to unanticipated situations. Yet it is precisely this kind of practice which is totally avoided in many of the individualized programs. Worse yet, the student is often stuck off by himself in the semi-isolation of a learning cubicle to follow instructions on a worksheet and, perhaps, to listen to a tape or phonograph record from time to time. If this kind of isolated task-completion becomes the main activity of the individualized program, then the student has much in common with the dehumanized worker in a 19th century sweatshop doing piecework for minimal rewards.

Now let me add hastily that I'm not opposed to a certain amount of individual drill work nor am I opposed to students using tape recorders, phonograph records or learning carrels. However, such activities are clearly absurd if they are not merely instrumental to the more important task of helping the student to relate to his fellow human beings in a social situation.

Incidentally, in this regard, there is recent evidence to indicate that the regular audio-lingual or traditional classroom is also quite deficient. An interaction analysis of 54 midwestern foreign language classrooms indicated that students have almost no opportunity whatever to produce a spontaneous utterance in the third year language class. The findings of this study suggest that the third-year foreign language student has about one hour of practice a year in using the foreign language spontaneously.

Of course, this doesn't have to happen. As a matter of fact, unipacs and student contracts <u>can</u> be written to allow for social interaction. That is, you can require that a small group of students get together to discuss what each student has presented on a given topic. In fact, one of our Wisconsin schools does all of its third and fourth year French instruction in this manner. Each four weeks students choose topics in which they are interested. (For example: TEENAGERS IN FRANCE TODAY: research on the customs and interests of the French teenager.) Toward the end of the four-week period, each student presents something in French on his area of interest and tries to get a discussion going in the small group situation. The teacher retires into the woodwork as much as possible during this time, serving mainly as an evaluator and stimulator.

The advantage to this approach is that it provides for the open-endedness that genuine language learning requires. But it also has severe limitations.

FIRST, it doesn't work very well until the third or fourth year;

SECOND, you need a vast library of appropriate books, magazines, and other materials;

THIRD, you need proper physical facilities where small-group work can be carried on conveniently; and

FOURTH, you need administrative sanction to allow free movement of students about the building and to permit loosely-structured projects to replace the typical prescribed lesson plans.

Intuitively, I accept this open-ended approach as the way to go. However, in all honesty, I must admit that as far as student achievement is concerned, we have very little evidence to support this freer approach to instruction even though courses of this type have been tried on and off for more than 40 years. The little evidence we do have indicates that student achievement is lower in foreign languages; higher in all other academic subjects, when you attempt an interest-centered approach. At least, that is the conclusion which seems to emerge.

The famous Eight-Year Study--which compared 2,500 students from progressive schools with a matched group of 2,500 from traditional college prep schools--showed that the students in the more permissive non-college-bound programs actually did better in academic subjects in their four years of college. The one exception was foreign languages. That is, the average grades of the 2,500 college students who were specifically prepared for college were lower in all academic disciplines except foreign languages. The significance of these findings (which tend to support a more permissive, progressive type of schooling) somehow got lost, perhaps in the confusion of World War II (the report came out in the early 1940's). However, to the foreign language community, the message is as clear as it is ominous; if the trend in education is toward permissiveness, we had better find ways to make foreign language learning possible in a permissive school atmosphere. Thus, to summarize the picture with regard to student achievement, it would appear that foreign language experimenters have yet to find an approach which shows very dramatic results even with the best of the various individualized plans. Overall, individualization appears to be no more effective than conventional lockstep instruction insofar as student achievement is concerned.

Let me now return to the question of cost accountability and ask: "Is individualized foreign language instruction cheaper?" Here the evidence is

clear; almost every individualized approach is more, not less, expensive. The last figures I saw, for example, on computer-assisted instruction indicated that costs were $4 per pupil per hour. To this I can only say that, if someone will give me $120 an hour for teaching 30 students (or even half that), I will find a way to get amazing results. In comparison to computer-assisted instruction, programmed textbooks are inexpensive even with tapes added in. However, they still cost a great deal more than the conventional textbook simply because the minimal-step format tends to require four or five bound volumes of material to cover the same number of items which would normally be presented in a single language textbook. Thus, the programmed materials tend to cost between $30 and $50 per student and, what is worse, they are often not reusable after the first year. Equipment requirements are also heavier; every student needs some kind of playback device if audio-lingual skills are to be taught. And that's not the end of it, programmed learning and other versions of self-pacing demand frequent checking of student progress--as I mentioned before--to insure that student learning is not going astray. However, self-pacing very rapidly leads to a situation in which no two students are at the same point in the program at the same time. As a result, group testing soon becomes impossible. This means, for example, that a test that was formerly administered once to 30 students is now administered 30 different times to each individual student. This in turn requires a highly complex set of testing and recording procedures. All of this requires more staff, which in turn requires more money. In fact, in my opinion, it is unwise to attempt a non-graded program unless pupil-to-staff ratios can be reduced to ten-to-one. And, even when it is possible to establish this ratio (using native aides, paraprofessionals and teaching interns, for example), even then staffing costs are higher. Thus, in summary, it can be said that individualized instruction, at its best, produces the same average student achievement but at a higher cost than conventional instruction.

My third category was democratization. "Does individualized instruction make a difference here?" The evidence on this question is extremely limited, but it favors individualization. For example, in the West Bend study we found that students of all I.Q. levels were able to achieve under conditions of individualized instruction. In fact, there was a very low correlation between I.Q. scores and the various measures of achievement. One student who scored in the upper quartile on standardized achievement tests and who completed the equivalent of three years of Spanish in two years had only a 97 I.Q. Moreover, the continuation rate into the third year courses almost doubled (it went from 38% to 62%). Much of this can be attributed to the fact that students were competing only against themselves in the meeting of absolute performance standards. Thus, slow students were not intimidated by fast ones. The student could choose any pace within reason and he could go about things in his own way to a considerable extent. However, he had to prove a high degree of mastery of each step in the learning sequence by demonstrating actual performance on a one-to-one basis with the teacher, a native aide, or a teacher intern. Thus, the fear of failure was eliminated as was the humiliation of low grades. In fact, there is some evidence that nearly all students can perform at the A or B level when they are allowed to take as much time as necessary to learn the material.

So, perhaps the best argument for individualization lies in its potential for making language learning accessible to students of all backgrounds and ability levels. It cannot be sold on grounds that it is cheaper or that it produces higher achievement. However, democratization would seem to be a worthwhile end in itself. Who can argue with a situation where everybody succeeds? Where everyone does as much as he can, does it well, and has some time left over to use what he has learned to pursue his own interests?

Well, for a moment let's imagine that the other blocks to individualization can be overcome. That is, let's pretend that we have eliminated competitive curve-grading, class rankings, state exams, and all the other traditions, administrative practices, and conditions which militate against individualized programs, however you define them. And let's say that we can set up a completely student-centered program in which the student progresses at his own rate, in his own way, and with material that pleases him. Do I then have any reservations? And the answer is, yes, I do if the human element is compromised. I guess what troubles me most about the utopian individualization schemes is what they do to the role of the teacher. Historically these schemes have tended to make the teacher into a sort of "learning clerk" who works in a kind of academic supermarket. The foreign language curricular products are all there on the shelves, having been prepared, supposedly, to anticipate every language learning problem down to the last phoneme and subjunctive verb ending. The teacher as clerk-evaluator--(the euphemism is "learning facilitator")--is charged with the responsibility of matching the student with the appropriate learning package and with administering tests to determine if the package was used correctly. If the answer is yes, he gives the student a new package to work with; if no, he gives him a remedial one. All the while the materials are doing the teaching; the teacher has little time for anything but diagnosing problems, administering tests and recording the results.

As an alternative it is possible, of course, to omit the testing by allowing the student to judge mastery of material for himself. However, as I mentioned earlier, when this procedure is used, neither the student nor the teacher can be sure of the quality of what is being learned. Thus, the integrity of the discipline is almost certain to suffer.

Another alternative is to eliminate potential low achievers from foreign languages. But this runs contrary to the democratization force, which I

mentioned earlier, and it is basically illogical. It says, in effect, that, because a student is weak in verbal skills, for that reason, we will exclude him from verbal-type subject matter. Or, in other words, it is to say that because a student is educationally deprived, we will therefore deprive him of further education. (In any case, foreign languages have a dubious future if they restrict enrollments largely to bright, college-bound students. That is the road to oblivion.)

A third alternative--the only acceptable one to me--is to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio to the point where the teacher can rise above the clerk-evaluator role and can interact as a live human being with small, cohesive social groups and with individuals. But this costs more money, even when low-cost aides and interns are used. So, the cost-accountability force comes into play, and most local schools won't pay the difference. (The federal government could, but its financial priorities are elsewhere.)

I have one final point which I will make in the form of a question: Has it never occurred to the planners of individualized instruction that the teacher, too, is an individual? In fact, because teachers have lived longer and have had a wider range of experiences, it would seem logical to assume that more--not less--diversity exists between individual teachers than between individual students? What process of logic, then, leads to the conclusion that, while students need a wide range of options to fit diverse personality types, teachers on the other hand can be uniformly placed in some stereotyped role with the blank designation of "learning facilitator." I reject that concept from the standpoint of the parent, the student, and the teacher. I want my children to be confronted by a variety of unique human types, not by a series of carbon-copy "facilitators" who conform to a single organizational pattern. And, as a student, I want a teacher who is flexible, perceptive, sensitive, autonomous, and, above all, stimulating. I don't see how he can be

all those things if he is stuck with a bunch of behavioral objectives and with someone else's pre-planned curriculum for reaching those objectives.

In the final analysis, individualization in humanistic subjects must begin and end with the human, pupil-teacher relationship. It is an illusion to think that individualization can be based chiefly on textbooks, programmed materials, unipacs, or behavioral objectives. This is because, in the modern world, such things tend to be half out of date between the time they are conceived and the time they are implemented in the classroom. Administrative gimmicks, elaborate equipment, varied materials, flexible schedules, and reduced class loads can help. But even with all of these you can still have students being treated like "output" products on a uniform educational assembly-line. In reality, the key to individualization lies in the mind, the emotions, and the attitudes of the classroom teacher. Given an adequate budget, paraprofessional help, acceptable working conditions, some released time, and the freedom to follow his (or her) own creative instincts, the regular foreign language classroom teacher is capable of developing a program which best fits the constantly-changing learning characteristics of individual students in each unique local school situation. This approach, which involves giving freedom, responsibility, and financial wherewithal to the classroom teacher, is not only the <u>best</u> way to individualize instruction--in my opinion, it is the <u>only</u> way to do it. It is the only way, that is, until the myths of individualized instruction are supported with the realities of educational dollars. Lacking proper budgets, individualization can take place only by placing excessive demands on the physical stamina and emotional stability of the classroom teacher. And that is too high a price to pay for a myth.